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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/PPD (DBENZE), NEA/ARP (BJACKSON), OBO/OM/ART
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SUBJECT: ARTISTIC AMBASSADOR LINDA TOUBY DAZZLES KUWAIT, NOVEMBER
30-DECEMBER 7, 2006

¶1. SUMMARY: Stunning New York abstract expressionist artist Linda Touby landed in Kuwait on her first trip to the Middle East on November 30, opening a whirlwind week of dynamic cultural interaction with a range of Kuwaiti audiences. Ms. Touby splashed onto the Kuwait art scene with a welcoming reception given in her honor by the Ambassador on December 2. Public Affairs staff put together a vigorous five-day program of engagement with youth and professional audiences for the American Artist Abroad, including gallery openings, art exhibits, a field trip with students, and lunches with art patrons and members of the ruling family during her visit. Ms. Touby's fascinating displays of her work and energetic lectures before hundreds of students on the topic of "The Journey of an American Artist" were polished, riveting, and so well-received that she continued to make new contacts until just hours before her return flight to the U.S. on December 7. END SUMMARY

¶2. COMMENT: Embassy highly recommends Posts take advantage of the "ART in Embassies" program as a means of reaching a wide variety of audiences. The artist effortlessly used her work to exchange ideas on a range of topics with groups of Kuwaitis representing diverse social classes, genders, employment sectors, as well as religious and political persuasions. END COMMENT.

Creatively Breaking down Barriers

¶3. Public Affairs staff arranged a full schedule of speaking, social, and press engagements for American painter Linda Touby whose weeklong visit to Kuwait November 30 through December 6 is part of the Department's ART in Embassies program. Energetic and charming Ms. Touby conducted outreach to hundreds of Kuwaiti youth through her popular lectures to art students at the Women's College at Kuwait University, the American University of Kuwait, Gulf University of Science & Technology, the Universal American School and the PAAET College of Basic Education and Interior Design/Arts. Local artists were able to learn from Ms. Touby's program and share their experiences at several social events, including a visit and presentation to artists at the Kuwait Arts Society, a traditional diwaniya visit, and a reception held December 2 at the Ambassador's residence. Seven of her paintings in the abstract style have been on display at the Ambassador's residence since 2004. The approximately 50 guests included Kuwaiti artists, musicians, media, and patrons of the arts as well art students. The story of the ART in Embassies program and Touby's life as an artist in America was maximized by press events (coverage below) that included exclusive interviews with local press and arts magazines and appearances on Kuwait TV. Detailed photographs of Touby's massive canvasses spilled off the edges of her PowerPoint presentation, a vibrant backdrop for her interactive lectures.

Multimedia Approach

¶4. Embassy Public Affairs staff arranged for Touby's message of understanding through the arts to reach the Kuwaiti public through

targeted media appearances. These included an exclusive interview with "Kuwait Review," a local art and literature monthly magazine, as well as appearances on two popular television programs. Ms. Touby was interviewed on "Good Morning Kuwait," a morning talk show with a loyal professional audience, and she reached out to Kuwaiti youth on the trendy evening program "Raikum Shabab" ("Your Opinion Youth"). The television appearances included clips of the artist framed by her artwork filmed at the Ambassador's residence. Capping off the media outreach were photographs and stories about her tour of Kuwait that appeared in the local Arabic- and English-language press.

Media coverage:

12/03/06, "Kuwait Times" daily newspaper, p. 23, 1/4 page, 1 photo, (circ. 40,000), English
12/04/06, "Good Morning Kuwait," Kuwait TV, 10 minute segment on the ART in Embassies program, talked about her inspiration and insights as an artist, and explained the New York art scene.
12/04/06, "Kuwait Review: Literature, Culture & the Arts" interview on Ms. Touby's life as an artist and the importance of art as bridge of understanding between different cultures, publication pending
12/05/06, "Al-Seyassah" daily newspaper, p. 55, 1/4 page, 3 photos, (circ. 45,000), Arabic
12/05/06, "Raikum Shabab" (Youth Opinion) on Al-Rai satellite TV, (viewership ~200,000), English and Arabic.
More than Meets the Eye

15. Linda Touby's discussion of the historical development of the abstract art genre captivated target audiences and individuals previously inaccessible to Public Affairs. Taken with her topic and work, one magazine editor, who previously declined Embassy invitations, attended three separate occasions on Touby's schedule.

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This artist's presentations also provided a unique opportunity for Public Affairs staff to interface with a conservative Muslim audience at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET). More than 250 university-level students enthusiastically received Touby's remarks and massed around her at the conclusion of her lectures, seeking autographs and her contact details. Her infectious spirit and open demeanor, combined with the retelling of her fascinating life experiences created a space for dialogue about issues beyond art, including a discussion with Kuwaiti students about the positive and negative aspects of gender-segregated education systems.

Sparking Dialogue through Art -----

16. The "ART in Embassies" program provided a genuine opportunity to exchange intellectual ideas and culture. Bringing an artist of Linda Touby's stature and expertise to a variety of venues and social groups in Kuwait promotes U.S. social values through interaction. Many of those from conservative backgrounds who attended Touby's lectures may not have had the opportunity to view her profoundly intense and colorful creations, speak with an American artist in person, or consider study or travel in the U.S. before meeting her. This program provided an avenue of approach to hundreds of students and art-lovers to a slice of American culture that is not present in newspapers, magazines, television, or movies.

Building Global Bridges through Art -----

17. Linda Touby's visit to Kuwait addressed the Embassy MPP goals of close ties with allies and friends, continuing outreach to conservative Islamic communities, and expanding outreach to youth audiences. This artistic ambassador's outstanding presentations encompassed a range of international influences including African, Asian, American, and European art forms that have inspired her work. She freely admitted that her experiences during this "life-changing" visit had altered her views about Kuwait and would certainly inform her future creations, endearing her to all the

audiences she addressed.

Eager Partners

18. Embassy program partners, such as American University of Kuwait (AUK), Gulf University of Science and Technology (GUST), and PAAET graciously provided venues, refreshments, and publicity for the speaking engagements. AUK also arranged transportation for Linda Touby and art class students to participate in a field trip at the Kuwait Science Center. Post has received a number of requests from program partners eager to continue engagement through art and to maintain communication with this extremely effective representative of American art and culture.

A Picture Perfect Success

19. Linda Touby's talks carried students on an exhilarating journey through her life in the New York art world. Ms. Touby was so popular that each event far exceeded the Embassy's expectations in terms of audience size and composition, bringing to life American society and values for even a number of religiously conservative audiences.

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